

The Time and Space of *Stimmung*: Poetic Negotiations of Modernity in Hölderlin and Rilke

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## OPENING REMARKS

An Hölderlin

Verweilung, auch am Vertrautesten nicht,  
Ist uns gegeben; aus den erfüllten  
Bildern stürzt der Geist zu plötzlich zu füllenden; Seen  
Sind erst im Ewigen. Hier ist Fallen  
Das Tüchtigste. Aus dem gekonnten Gefühl  
Überfallen hinab ins geahndete, weiter.

Dir, du Herrlicher, war, dir war, du Beschwörer, ein ganzes  
Leben das dringende Bild, wenn du es aussprachst,  
Die Zeile schloß sich wie Schicksal, ein Tod war  
Selbst in der lindesten, und du betatest ihn; aber  
Der vorgehende Gott führte dich drüben hervor.

O du wandernder Geist, du wanderndster! Wie sie doch alle  
Wohnen im warmen Gedicht, häuslich, und lang  
Bleiben im schmalen Vergleich. Teilnehmende. Du nur  
Ziehst wie der Mond. Und unten hellt und verdunkelt  
Deine nächtliche sich, die heilig erschrockene Landschaft,  
Die du in Abschieden fühlst. Keiner  
Gab sie erhabener hin, gab sie ans Ganze  
Heiler zurück, unbedürftiger. So auch  
Spieltest du heilig durch nicht mehr gerechnete Jahre  
Mit dem unendlichen Glück, als wär es nicht innen, läge  
Keinem gehörend im sanften

Rasen der Erde umher, von göttlichen Kindern verlassen.  
 Ach, was die Höchsten begehren, du legtest es wunschlos  
 Baustein auf Baustein: es stand. Doch selber sein Umsturz  
 Irrte dich nicht.

Was, da ein solcher, Ewiger, war, mißtraun wir  
 Immer dem Irdischen noch? Statt am Vorläufigen ernst  
 Die Gefühle zu lernen für welche  
 Neigung, künftig im Raum?<sup>1</sup>

Written in 1914, shortly after the advent of the first world war, “An Hölderlin” begins with some generalizations about life and the best way to live, which are revealed in the following two stanzas, both addressed directly to Hölderlin, to have arisen from the speaker’s impressions of Hölderlin’s poetry. What the speaker appears to have gleaned from Hölderlin’s poetry is the knowledge that change is the essence of lived experience and that the best way to live is not only to accept change but to embrace it. The poem envisions this as allowing oneself to fall from one scene to the next. The concluding stanza suggests that one take Hölderlin and his approach to life as a model for living. Although the poem bears the marks of an acquaintance with Hölderlin’s works, it also considers the poet’s biography, in particular his later years, when he had succumb to mental illness. Part tribute, part biographical literary criticism, “An Hölderlin” is evidently one of Rilke’s finest short works.

For a reader unacquainted with this poem, a natural starting point in seeking to understand it would be to consider what influence Hölderlin may have had on Rilke. Valid a

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<sup>1</sup> Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Werke: Kommentierte Ausgabe in Vier Bänden*. 1 Aufl. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1996, Vol. 2, p. 123-24.

question as this may be, it is, for the purposes of this thesis, one best left to philology.<sup>2</sup> Instead, one might begin by thinking about the broader historical context and consider that Hölderlin and Rilke make for an interesting pairing. They lived about 100 years apart, and both were active during times of immense social change. Roughly speaking, Hölderlin can be taken to represent the year 1800 and Rilke 1900.<sup>3</sup> Regarding the question of what particular features of their respective works would make for the most fruitful comparison, Rilke's poem contains a hidden clue. In the final stanza, the speaker suggests through a rhetorical question that one study not Hölderlin's ideas but his feelings [Gefühle]. This emphasis on the affective dimensions of Hölderlin's poetry leads one directly to the concept of *Stimmung* (mood or atmosphere). As the following two chapters will demonstrate, *Stimmung*, particularly as it is theorized in the work of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht,<sup>4</sup> makes for an interesting and potentially significant point of comparison between the two poets. Not only the particular atmospheres and moods of each poet's works, but also the different ways in which Hölderlin and Rilke use poetry as a way of thinking about *Stimmung* prove interesting. This too one can glean from Rilke's poem. It is to be found in the speaker's suggestion, again in the final stanza, that the feelings present in Hölderlin's poetry are not merely there to be experienced, but that they could prove useful to the reader in his or her own life. Ultimately, one can draw conclusions about the ways in which

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<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Manfred Engel maintains in his commentary to "An Hölderlin" that Hölderlin's late work is, along with Klopstock, the most significant influence on the elevated style of Rilke's late works (Ibid., p. 523).

<sup>3</sup> In his seminal work *Discourse Networks 1800 / 1900*, Friedrich Kittler compares the communication systems, including the hardware used in the transmission of text, that existed around the years 1800 and 1900, respectively. Although my analysis of Hölderlin and Rilke does not draw on Kittler's thought, the format of his book--and especially the fact that he treats the "discourse networks" of 1800 and 1900 not chronologically or in terms of development and progress, but simply as distinct paradigms, provided some of the inspiration for this project.

<sup>4</sup> I return frequently in my thesis to the introductory chapter of Gumbrecht's book *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*.

*Stimmung* was being conceived of around 1800 and 1900, respectively, through a comparison of these two poets.<sup>5</sup>

In undertaking such a comparative study, it soon becomes apparent that Hölderlin and Rilke not only both thematize *Stimmung* in their works, but that each conceives of *Stimmung* in starkly dissimilar terms. Whereas for Hölderlin, atmosphere and mood are inextricably tied up in questions of temporality, Rilke sees an important connection between *Stimmung* and space. Rilke's tendency to think in spatial terms is evident in "An Hölderlin." Here, the speaker describes life's moments as pictures to be filled and depicts the passing of time and the gaining of experience as a falling from one feeling to another. Both the notion of emptiness or fullness and that of falling are explicitly spatial. Neither Hölderlin's interest in temporality nor Rilke's interest in space is altogether surprising in and of itself when one considers, on the one hand, Hölderlin's abiding fascination with the poetry and mythology of the ancient world, in particular ancient Greece, and on the other, the fact that Rilke was active during the emergence of the modern metropolis, an era in which people were beginning to experience the world in profoundly new ways. However, the way each poet connects time and space, respectively, to *Stimmung* is rather unexpected.

A good starting point for anyone wanting to understand Hölderlin's concern with the relation of *Stimmung* to time is the late, unfinished ode "Griechenland." In "Griechenland," Hölderlin not only writes explicitly of *Stimmung*, but includes rich meteorological images as well and references to music, which he unites oddly into a single synesthetic phenomenon. In the

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<sup>5</sup> In an essay titled "Vocation and Voice" (trans. Jeff Fort), Giorgio Agamben writes about Heidegger and the relationship between *Stimmung* and language (in fact, he grounds the very origin of language in the idea of *Stimmung*.) Interestingly, Agamben refers to both Rilke (*The Duino Elegies*) and Hölderlin ("On the Process of the Poetic Spirit").

introduction to *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, Gumbrecht maintains that references to music and weather often appear when an author is seeking to make present atmospheres and moods or even reflecting upon them within the space of that particular work.<sup>6</sup> Thus, when one takes into account the poem's thematization of *Stimmung*, along with its obvious interest in the ancient world, which its title indicates, one sees that Hölderlin conceives of *Stimmung* in explicitly temporal terms.

The bulk of this analysis, however, is devoted to another of Hölderlin's late poems, "Mnemosyne." There are two reasons for this. First, Hölderlin wrote "Mnemosyne" and "Griechenland" at about the same time, around 1803, and while he left "Griechenland" unfinished, "Mnemosyne" constitutes a completed poem. And second, the poems can be easily treated as companion pieces, for Hölderlin sets both against the backdrop of "Ekpyrosis," which, according to Stoic cosmology, is the periodic conflagration--and coming apart--of the universe.<sup>7</sup> Not only is Hölderlin's interest in Ekpyrosis representative of his abiding interest in ancient Greece, but the belief in Ekpyrosis is itself indicative of an understanding of time that is vastly dissimilar from any that the reader, whether in Hölderlin's time or today--would likely be familiar with. Thus, taken together, "Griechenland" and "Mnemosyne" offer an abundance of rich material representative of Hölderlin's conception of *Stimmung* as related to time and temporality.

Although Rilke's interest in *Stimmung* is less obvious, owing to the lack of explicit references to this concept, the first of the *Duino Elegies* does indeed contain material from which

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<sup>6</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> In his commentary to "Mnemosyne," Jochen Schmidt provides a great deal of information about this concept and comments extensively on its importance for understanding Hölderlin's late poems, especially "Mnemosyne." My knowledge of this concept comes entirely from him.

it is clear that Rilke uses the poem to think about the nature and function of atmospheres and moods. This is particularly evident in the concluding strophe. Here, the speaker describes, in musical terms, the *Stimmung* after the untimely death of Linus, the creator of music in Greek mythology. Moreover, it is suggested that such a *Stimmung* not only provides solace to those remaining but may actually aide them in their internal growth. This scene also makes it clear that Rilke conceives of *Stimmung* in explicitly spatial terms.<sup>8</sup> What the speaker describes is not merely a general mood or atmosphere, but the mood or atmosphere in the particular *space* from which Linus departed. Upon reading back over the poem from start to finish, the reader is struck by how often the speaker references both space in general and particular spaces.<sup>9</sup> From this it follows that Rilke's interest in *Stimmung* in the first of the *Duino Elegies* is inextricably tied to his ideas about space. Indeed, one can show, using evidence from the text, how Rilke conceives of *Stimmung* as a key element in the changed relation to space his poem calls for.

Ultimately, the significance of this undertaking lies in the way in which it recasts the concept of *Stimmung*, positioning it on an axis of time and space and treats moods and atmospheres not as the mere byproducts of texts, but as integral parts of their inner workings. Comparing Hölderlin and Rilke allows one to focus on two distinct paradigms for the treatment of *Stimmung* in poetry. Although it would obviously be going too far to suggest that each of

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<sup>8</sup> In his commentary to this section of the poem, Manfred Engel remarks that Rilke's personal etiology of music is based on the sudden change of emptiness into fullness, along with the change from shock and lament to solace and help (*Werke: Kommentierte Ausgabe in Vier Bänden*, volume II, p. 629). Emptiness and fullness are, needless to say, spatial conceptions. Moreover, music, as I have pointed out, is often used as a means of speaking about atmosphere and mood more generally.

<sup>9</sup> In her essay "Interstitial Space in Rilke's Short Prose Works," Jenniffer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei uses the term "interstitial space" to describe the development, in Rilke's work, of "a more encompassing and differentiated structure of the spatial imagination" than what has traditionally been attributed to him under the name "Weltinnenraum," an imagined, inner poetic space. Although, in my thesis, I examine Rilke's use of space through the lense of *Stimmung*, Gosetti-Ferencei's project bears some similarity to mine in that we are both concerned with a relationship to space that is multifaceted and subject to change. Moreover, her work confirms the importance of space for Rilke.



these paradigms is typical of the dominant theories of *Stimmung* around 1800 and 1900, respectively, it is nevertheless the case that both poets are in many ways representative of the eras in which they lived and wrote. Thus, one might say that each of these paradigms is, if not typical, certainly one response to a changed (and changing) experience of reality.

## CHAPTER ONE

### ***Stimmung* and Temporality in Hölderlin's Poems "Griechenland" and "Mnemosyne"**

#### **Intertextuality**

In *Leaves of Mourning*, Anselm Haverkamp advances a reading of Hölderlin's "Mnemosyne" grounded in the philosophical ideas of Paul de Man, Theodor Adorno, and Walter Benjamin, among others.<sup>10</sup> Of these three scholars, each of whom has published significantly on Hölderlin, Haverkamp draws in particular on De Man's deconstructionist approach, arguing that "Mnemosyne" is, at its core, a poem about reading, or more accurately, as we shall see, a poem about the impossibility of reading as such. To support this claim, Haverkamp adduces numerous examples of references to other texts contained within the poem, by which he attempts to show that "Mnemosyne" in fact constitutes an elaborate, intertextual web, containing both ancient and contemporary literary material. Take, for example, this passage from his reading of the third and final stanza:

Hölderlin thus repeats here his reading of the heroic myths of classical Greece and does so not in the enumeration of references but in the wording of his own translations. (...) In addition to the figtree from the *Iliad* and Pausanias's reference to the city of Mnemosyne (direct references), this passage has to do above all with quotations from the *Ajax* of Sophocles and Pindar, especially the second *Nemean Ode*.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Anselm Haverkamp, *Leaves of Mourning: Hölderlin's Late Work, with an Essay on Keats and Melancholy*, trans. Vernon Chadwick. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

He then contends that the lack of clear correspondences between the poem's constituent parts reflects the poet's failure, ultimately, to read. To conclude, Haverkamp puts forward a persuasive and well crafted argument for his reading of "Mnemosyne" and, in engaging with some of the most astute Hölderlin scholarship of earlier eras, demonstrates in his selection of interlocutors that he is more than capable of holding his own among such giants of theory as De Man and Adorno. Engaging Haverkamp is thus a formidable task indeed. The following reading of "Mnemosyne" is therefore not intended as a rejection of Haverkamp's interpretation, but its aim is rather to augment his enormously valuable contribution to Hölderlin scholarship by making a case for another kind of reading.

In seeking to demonstrate Hölderlin's intertextuality, Haverkamp directs his attention to the third and final stanza in particular, counterposing his reading to earlier interpretations, which have by and large focused on the meaning of the stanza's contents as classical symbols and tropes rather than as references to particular texts, something, he argues, that has been largely ignored by past research. In fact, as Haverkamp points out, some of these references come directly from Hölderlin's own translations. Next, he incorporates into his language-centered, deconstructionist reading several of Adorno's and Benjamin's ideas about the structure of the poem, most notably Adorno's theory of parataxis, to produce a synthesis that undergirds his complex and multifarious argument throughout the remainder of the essay. According to Adorno, Hölderlin continually subverts synthesis, which, under normal circumstances, would aide the reader in the production of meaning, by placing side by side grammatically and semantically disparate units of language.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, due to the absence of subordinating conjunctions, the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

poem's contiguous parts resist hierarchization. Thus, the form of Hölderlin's poetry has the frequent effect of undermining its content.

From this marriage of theories, on the one hand deconstructionism and on the other Adorno's theory of parataxis (which, in turn, draws on earlier remarks by Benjamin),<sup>13</sup> Haverkamp concludes, "the fall out of the old order of things into metonymic arbitrariness, that is, from the syntax of the order of things into the parataxis of a text that no longer represents, or corresponds to, the order of things, is in *Mnemosyne* no fall of figures and names but of texts whose wreckage results in a ghostly after-image of that which was once to be epically remembered as myth."<sup>14</sup> Again positioning himself against previous readings, Haverkamp challenges the notion that Hölderlin's late poetry represents a reconstitution of the epic from within the form of the lyric, an idea that he seems to attribute to, among others, Friedrich Beißner and Peter Szondi.<sup>15</sup> Instead, he argues, the poem's disorder points to the impossibility of reclaiming original myths. "Epic parataxis," he writes, "does not reconstitute the epic but rather collects the fragments of its appropriation so as to become in them shockingly aware of the loss. The allegorical coherence of *Mnemosyne* consists in nothing more than this metonymic accumulation of its parts that does not represent the myth itself so much as its loss in the process of futile appropriation."<sup>16</sup> Quoting Benjamin, Haverkamp locates the cause of the poet's failure to appropriate the epic in its "vanishing past," which has rendered it unreadable.<sup>17</sup> "*Mnemosyne*," he argues, should be read as allegory of the unreadability of historical texts. Thus, the significance of "*Mnemosyne*" is ultimately to be found in its discord.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 44-45.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 43-44.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>17</sup> "On the face of nature 'History' is written in the ciphers of the vanishing past."

### ***Stimmung* and Lyrical Experience**

My primary criticism of Haverkamp's essay and the starting point for my reading of "Mnemosyne" is that it fails to fully consider the question of lyrical experience, which I define as the poet's encounter with reality as it is manifested in--and mediated by--the poem.<sup>18</sup> In rendering everything text, the essay focuses disproportionately on the third stanza, the section of the poem most easily reduced to little more than a collage of literary references. While Haverkamp's intertextual reading of "Mnemosyne" is both keen and persuasive, it calls for an answer of some kind, one that considers all three stanzas equally and addresses the question of experience as it is conceptualized in the poem. For this reason I will now, somewhat paradoxically, turn to another of Hölderlin's late poems, "Griechenland," which, I believe, contains valuable clues for how one might begin to approach an alternative reading of "Mnemosyne." Although it is remarkably complex and certainly worthy of an entire essay unto itself, I wish to devote the better part of the present chapter to "Mnemosyne" and will therefore limit myself to the section of the poem most immediately relevant to the discussion at hand. The following pages are thus intended to introduce an idea--by way of "Griechenland"--that offers the possibility of taking seriously Haverkamp's reading while at the same time addressing more fully the question of lyrical experience.

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<sup>18</sup> In his book *Songs of Experience: Modern American and European Variations on a Universal Theme*, Martin Jay discusses "aesthetic experience" and the renewed interest in the role of the body in experience that emerged during the 18th century. Although his chapter on this, "Returning to the Body through Aesthetic Experience," focuses primarily on the experience of art objects, the same basic ideas apply to the aesthetic experience of natural scenes, as it is depicted in Hölderlin's poem. Moreover, this trend is particularly important for the concept of *Stimmung*, which I will explain later in the chapter.

Like “Mnemosyne,” “Griechenland” depicts the individual’s struggle to win foothold in a world driven toward chaos by powerful forces of disintegration. We find this antinomy represented in the poem by the immediate and destructive appearance of God on the one hand and, on the other, by his appearing as mediated or disguised. Composed in the same vein as “Mnemosyne,” “Griechenland” is likewise imbued with parataxis. One distinguishing feature of the poem, however, is the title’s relation to the body of the text. For the moment, it will suffice merely to call attention to its function of referring to a particular historical setting, namely ancient Greece. As mentioned above, and as is the case in “Mnemosyne,” the poem orients itself with respect to the individual’s horizon of experience. However, here, unlike in “Mnemosyne,” this also constitutes the poem’s initial point of departure:

O ihr Stimmen des Geschicks, ihr Wege des Wanderers  
 Denn an der Schule Blau,  
 Fernher, am Tosen des Himmels  
 Tönt wie der Amsel Gesang  
 Der Wolken heitere Stimmung gut  
 Gestimmt vom Dasein Gottes, dem Gewitter.<sup>19</sup>

The poem begins with the speaker calling out to the “voices of fate.” By staging the first verses within a mode characteristic of the literary conventions of the ode, the poet ensures that the text is immediately recognizable as such. *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* describes the tone of the pindaric odes<sup>20</sup> as “emotional, exalted and intense” and explains that they “frequently appear incoherent in their brilliance of imagery, abrupt shifts in subject matter, and apparent disorder of form within the individual sections.”<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, we are prompted to

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<sup>19</sup> Hölderlin, Friedrich. “Griechenland,” ver. 3. In *Hölderlin, Sämtliche Gedichte*, ed. Jochen Schmidt. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag im Taschenbuch, 2005, p. 421-22.

<sup>20</sup> The odes with which Hölderlin would have been most familiar and of which he translated several.

<sup>21</sup> Fogle, S.F; Fry, P.H. “Ode” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Roland Greene et. al. 4th ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 971-72.

consider whose fate it is that is being invoked. Surely it includes the fate of the speaker, we conclude, for why else would he cry out? Thus, our attention is immediately drawn to who is speaking and to the experiences that might have impelled him to speak out at all.

Perhaps more significant than the poem's mode of address, however, is the repetition of the word *Stimme*, which is to be found in the words "Stimmen," "Stimmung," and "Gestimmt," and which, I would argue, identifies Hölderlin as a poet concerned with atmosphere or mood. I will return to the--perhaps not immediately obvious--relationship between sounds and atmospheres or moods shortly. Suffice it to say for now that they are, and have been throughout the history of writing about literature, closely linked. This interest in atmosphere or mood is further evinced in the ensuing lines, particularly in the last ("Erscheinend singen Gesangeswolken"), but also in the other allusions to sounds, which seem to echo the *Stimmen* of the first six verses:

Und Rufe, wie hinausschauen, zur  
 Unsterblichkeit und Helden;  
 Viel sind Erinnerungen. Wo darauf  
 Tönend, wie des Kalbs Haut  
 Die Erde, von Verwüstungen her, Versuchungen der Heiligen  
 Denn anfangs bildet das Werk sich  
 Großen Gesetzen nachgehet, die Wissenschaft  
 Und Zärtlichkeit und den Himmel breit lauter Hülle nachher  
 Erscheinend singen Gesangeswolken.

This feature of the poem points back to my earlier contention that "Griechenland," like "Mnemosyne," is grounded in experience. Mood or atmosphere--depending on how one wishes to translate the term *Stimmung* into English--represents nothing more than the affective dimension of the poem, and therefore to subjective experience. For a more thorough understanding of this notion of *Stimmung*, which, I believe, characterizes the experience at the

center of “Griechenland” as well as the correspondence between *Stimmung* and aurality, I will now turn to the work of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, who has, in his book *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, provided us with a tremendously helpful way of approaching this notoriously ill-defined concept.

In *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, Gumbrecht proposes we read for *Stimmung*, or the particular atmosphere or mood of a literary text, and suggests that we understand this notion as a new theoretical paradigm, analogous to the practice of “reading for plot,” as it has been advanced by Peter Brooks.<sup>22</sup> In defense of his choice of the German word *Stimmung*, as opposed to an English alternative such as “climate” or “mood,” Gumbrecht cites its associations with sound and music:

Only in German does the word connect with *Stimme* and *stimmen*. The first means “voice,” and the second “to tune an instrument”; by extension, *stimmen* also means “to be correct.” As the tuning of an instrument suggests, specific moods and atmospheres are experienced on a continuum, like musical scales. They present themselves to us as nuances that challenge our powers of discernment and description, as well as the potential of language to capture them.<sup>23</sup>

Gumbrecht points out that, in addition to analogies with music and sound, *Stimmung* is often conceptualized in terms of weather. Texts, he argues, in addition to signifying, always stand in a direct and concrete relationship to our bodies, through their prosody manifested as tones and rhythms, a relationship that he terms “presence,” which is both the source and the site of *Stimmung*. Thus, like sound, weather represents a form of physical reality that both happens to our bodies and surrounds them. Furthermore, he argues, texts often invoke music and weather when they intend to conjure up moods and atmospheres or reflect upon them. This, I contend, is

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<sup>22</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.



the case with “Griechenland,” a text, as we have seen, laden with references to weather and sound.

Ultimately, for Gumbrecht, *Stimmung* represents the possibility of a much needed revitalization in the field of literary studies, and he proposes it as an escape from the paralyzing choice between deconstruction and cultural studies, approaches, he contends, that are no longer as fruitful as they once might have seemed. *Stimmung*’s revitalizing potential is to be found, he argues, in the objective of such an approach to reading, namely, “to follow configurations of atmosphere and mood in order to encounter otherness in intense and intimate ways.”<sup>24</sup> Thus, it is in the possibility of experiencing a historical alterity through the immediate “presence” of a text that *Stimmung* as a concept finds its ultimate purpose and reveals itself to be a viable alternative to more institutionalized approaches to literary criticism. According to Gumbrecht, the way in which this happens is as follows: each text, he argues, in its unique prosody, once constituted a material component of the historical context out of which it arose, woven inextricably into the fabric of a particular time and place and no less real than the people who may have encountered it. Thus, any text carries--not within it, but rather on its very surface--the potential to recall, in a way, the pervading atmosphere or mood of the historical setting in which it was originally formed (and perhaps, performed).

It seems that it is precisely this capability of literary texts, namely to effect an incursion of the then-and-there into the here-and-now, that informed Hölderlin’s decision to title his poem “Griechenland” while omitting explicit references to that historical time and place. This represents his awareness of the intimate relationship between a text and its historical context, a

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 12-13.

relationship he posits in the act of naming. In fact, I argue, this principle constitutes the very logic of Hölderlin's poetics. Furthermore, as I have pointed out, Hölderlin, by invoking traditional images of atmosphere or mood--whether musical or meteorological--shows a keen awareness of *Stimmung*. Herein lies the affinity between Hölderlin's and Gumbrecht's respective attitudes towards literature, namely their mutual recognition that time and place can be immanent in a text and need not be explicitly thematized to be made present. Both posit a relationship between text and setting that goes beyond what has traditionally been included under the purview of "content." Thus, by reading for *Stimmung*, we can amend Haverkamp's reading of "Mnemosyne" so as to arrive at an interpretation that considers more fully the question of experience without rejecting altogether Haverkamp's interest in how the poem stands in relation to older texts.

### **"Mnemosyne"**

Owing to its eschatological concerns and similarly paratactic style, "Mnemosyne" makes for a fitting companion piece to "Griechenland." However, whereas in "Griechenland," Hölderlin's account of *Stimmung* is fairly straightforward, in "Mnemosyne," he complicates the matter. By introducing multiple temporalities into the mix, Hölderlin challenges us to consider the relationship between *Stimmung* and temporality and to restructure our understanding of *Stimmung* as such. What happens to the atmosphere or mood of a text when dissimilar experiences of time are made present? Does each temporality have a corresponding *Stimmung*? Moreover, by reading "Mnemosyne" with a view to Gumbrecht's project in *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, we can amend Haverkamp's explication of the poem and thus work towards a

synthesis of Gumbrecht and Haverkamp's theoretical precepts with the objective of crafting a more effective reading. By bringing the question of lyrical experience back into the picture, we can reorient ourselves with respect to the text without having to sacrifice Haverkamp's valuable insights into the work's intertextuality. What we stand to gain from this, I argue, is an analysis that bridges the gap between Hölderlin's own experience-oriented approach to poetry and Haverkamp's text-oriented approach to interpretation, while keeping an eye toward Gumbrecht's theory of *Stimmung*.

As I have argued, in "Griechenland," Hölderlin uses images of music and meteorological phenomena, especially clouds, as a way of thinking about *Stimmung*. In "Mnemosyne," however, we find no such references to sounds or weather. What we have instead is a poet reflecting on *Stimmung* not in terms of its immediate effect on the body, as both weather and music attest to, but in terms of temporality. Moreover, the reader of "Mnemosyne" is prompted by the commingling of multiple temporalities present in the poem to reconsider traditional notions of time in poetry. "Mnemosyne" incorporates three temporalities, reflected in the poem's tripartite structure. Roughly speaking, the first stanza is staged within a temporality before time and is cosmic in scope; the second stanza, on the other hand, appears to represent modern temporality and can be taken to reflect the poet's historical time; and the third and final stanza, centered around the heroes of the ancient Greek epics, depicts a pre-modern temporality--mythical time. Thus, by staging his poem within multiple temporalities, Hölderlin prompts us to consider the relationship between temporality and *Stimmung* and problematizes the notion put forth by Gumbrecht that a poem must embody a particular, unified atmosphere or mood. The following

paragraphs will examine each respective stanza in further detail with a view to the intersections of temporality and *Stimmung*.

As has been indicated, the first stanza of “Mnemosyne” is staged within a temporality prior to, or rather outside of, the human quantification of time. It is cosmic temporality, and its unit of measurement, the cyclical conflagration of the universe--termed Ekpyrosis--is spoken of only in imagistic and highly evocative metaphors. When humans do appear here, it is only with respect to the inexorable unraveling of the cosmos. This is described, variously, as an immense burden on the shoulders (“Und vieles / Wie auf den Schultern eine / Last von Scheitern ist / Zu behalten.”) and as a powerfully disorienting force vis-a-vis the body (“Vorwärts aber und rückwärts wollen wir / Nicht sehn.”). In both cases, it is not a feature of the human body itself but its relationship to time being expressed. There is one instance of the poet speaking in terms of meteorological phenomena, namely the speaker’s mention of “hills of the sky” (“Hügeln des Himmels”), which Jochen Schmidt has identified in his commentary as a chiffre for clouds.<sup>25</sup> While such images can certainly be taken as a sign of Hölderlin’s abiding interest in *Stimmung*, as I have done in my reading of “Griechenland,” I would argue that in the case of “Mnemosyne,” we should look to the ways in which Hölderlin speaks of the body’s physical encounters with temporalities, much as Gumbrecht has spoken of the body’s encounters with atmospheres and moods, for an understanding of the role of *Stimmung* in this poem. The reason for this, I argue, is that each of the three temporalities present in “Mnemosyne” effects a distinct atmosphere or mood within the text and that, in positing a relationship between the body and a particular temporality, Hölderlin is in fact once again reflecting on *Stimmung*.

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<sup>25</sup> Schmidt, Jochen. Kommentar zu “Mnemosyne.” In *Hölderlin, Sämtliche Gedichte*, ed. Jochen Schmidt. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag im Taschenbuch, 2005, p. 1040.

In the second stanza, we encounter what I have described as a modern temporality, an understanding of time familiar to both the poet and to the reader of the poem. In contrast to the first stanza, in which “temporality before time” is depicted using a series of disparate and highly imagistic metaphors, the temporality of the second stanza is encapsulated within a single, integrated image of human dwelling. This is time as it is measured with regard to the seasons of the earth, which we are dependent on for food and nourishment. Moreover, the image, of an alpine village, is suffused with a feeling of harmony, the traditional conception of *Stimmung*. This can be seen in the first three lines, in which sunshine, the earth’s dust and the forests’ shadows are united in a single image and thus join in a symbolically abiding marriage of the earth and sky:

Wie aber liebes? Sonnenschein  
 Am Boden sehen wir und trockenen Staub  
 Und heimatlich die Schatten der Wälder und es blühet  
 And Dächern der Rauch, bei alter Krone  
 Der Türme, friedsam; gut sind nämlich  
 Hat gegenredend die Seele  
 Ein Himmlisches verwundet, die Tageszeichen.

Furthermore, as the poet shifts his gaze towards the village, we encounter a representation of modern temporality in signs of a continuous human presence. As smoke rises from the chimneys, it “blossoms” [“blühet”] among the roofs of what is presumably a cluster of houses and gathers “peacefully” [“friedsam”] around the “old crowns of the towers” [“bei alter Krone / Der Türme”]. Thus, the village serves as a depiction of a contemporary understanding of time, both in its passage and in its quantification by humans. This is underscored by the final pronouncement in this first part of the stanza, namely that the “signs of the day” are “good” and something to be set in opposition to the tumultuous world of the gods and of the soul.

In the second part of the stanza, we encounter, for the first time, a particular human being, namely the wanderer, who, as Jochen Schmidt has indicated, can be taken to represent the poet himself:

Denn Schnee, wie Maienblumen  
 Das Edelmütige, wo  
 Es seie, bedeutend, glänzet auf  
 Der grünen Wiese  
 Der Alpen, hälftig, da, vom Kreuze redend, das  
 Gesetzt ist unterwegs einmal  
 Gestorbenen, auf hoher Straß  
 Ein Wandersmann geht zornig,  
 Fern ahnend mit  
 Dem andern, aber was ist dies?

Thus, we conclude, the poet has staged his appearance in the poem within a modern temporality. However, a closer engagement with the text will reveal that within the modern temporality are to be found signs of the aforementioned “temporality before time” as well as of a pre-modern temporality, or mythical time. The image of snow melting “meaningfully” [“bedeutend”] to reveal the green grass of the meadow harks back to the images of flux in the first stanza--the ripening fruit and the “elements of the earth bolting like horses” [“Wie Rosse, gehn die gefangenen / Element’ und alten / Gesetze der Erd.”]--and thus to a form of time that is cyclical and outside of our attempts to measure and regulate it. The image in the second to last line, on the other hand, in which the wanderer “senses distantly” points forward towards the ensuing stanza, in which he remembers the heroes of the ancient Greek epics and, to mythical time. Thus, we encounter in this stanza a commingling of temporalities, reflected in the form of the poem, at the center of which stands the poet in the form of the wanderer.

In the third and final stanza, we enter upon the thoughts of the poet-wanderer, who, in remembering the deaths of ancient heroes Achilles, Ajax and Patroclus, looks back towards another, earlier temporality, which I have termed “mythic time:”

Am Feigenbaum ist mein  
Achilles mir gestorben,  
Und Ajax liegt  
An den Grotten der See,  
An Bächen, benachbart dem Skamandros.

As Anselm Haverkamp has pointed out, many of the references contained in the stanza stem directly from Hölderlin’s readings and translations of the original Greek texts, and we might therefore speak of it as a kind of intertextual web. However, while this is surely a valuable insight, it does not consider the stanza as a constituent part of the poem and thus fails to address its relationship to the preceding stanzas. While the stanza’s references to fallen heroes and the long-gone city of memory, Eлевtherä, as well as the gnomic concluding remarks make it recognizable as a conclusion, I would argue that, temporally speaking, it is in fact more ambiguous than it might at first seem. The reason for this is that, as we know from the end of the previous stanza, the entire stanza remains suspended in the memory of the poem’s principal figure, who, as we know, inhabits the present moment. This can be seen in the repetition of the word *mein*. It is obvious that the speaker remains in the poem’s present. Thus, the poem’s three stanzas do not possess a narrative trajectory, but rather exist simultaneously, linked by the central figure, the poet wanderer.

In conclusion, I argue that Hölderlin, by expanding the idea of *Stimmung* to encompass not only discrete historical moments but also dissimilar temporalities, challenges us as readers to

rethink the relationship between time and *Stimmung*. Although this is complicated somewhat by the fact that particular historical moments often have their own ideas about time that differ widely from our modern experience, he shows in “Mnemosyne” that such temporalities can exist concurrently within the space of the poem. Thus, by staging his poem within several temporalities--both “older” and “newer”--that exist concurrently, Hölderlin intervenes in the prevailing notion of progress of his historical time and place. As someone who lived during the Enlightenment, Hölderlin would have been well acquainted with the unfettered optimism and faith in scientific progress of the time. By presenting primordial and mythical temporalities not as temporalities that have been overcome but as still a part of our everyday reality, Hölderlin questions such a belief in progress. Moreover, by reintroducing the question of poetic experience into the picture, we have shown that Hölderlin’s intertextuality can be understood as an attempt not only to make present a bygone historical era, but also to describe his own lyrical experience through the curation of historical materials. Even the portions of “Mnemosyne” that are directly quoted from Hölderlin’s translation of Greek poetry point beyond themselves toward the experience of the poet who translated, selected and sequenced them. By piecing together this deeply personal poem using excerpts from antique texts, Hölderlin allows two historical moments to speak at once, thereby resisting the urge to reflect on antiquity from a present day perspective as a bygone era and way of being.



## CHAPTER TWO

### *Stimmung* and Space in the First of Rilke's *Duino Elegies*

#### *Stimmung*, Space and Modernity

In *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, Gumbrecht suggests that texts often reference music and weather in order to make present or reflect upon moods and atmospheres, adding, “being affected by sound or weather, while among the easiest and least obtrusive forms of experience, is, physically, a concrete encounter (in the literal sense of *en-countering*: meeting up) with our physical environment.”<sup>26</sup> Our bodies encounter music and weather much as they encounter moods and atmospheres. Moreover, the language we use to describe music and weather can be used as a means of speaking about *Stimmung*. The previous chapter drew attention to Hölderlin's use of meteorological imagery and argued that the poems “Griechenland” and “Mnemosyne” reflect upon the relationship between *Stimmung* and temporality. The *Duino Elegies* also give thought to problems of temporality as they offer up a deeply mystical world view in face of the technological positivism of the time and lament the great losses in art and religion of the modern era.<sup>27</sup> While Hölderlin draws upon the texts of classical antiquity in order to think and speak about his own historical moment, Rilke experiences the present as severed from the past, and the

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<sup>26</sup> Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung: On a Hidden Potential of Literature*, trans. Erik Butler (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2012), p. 4.

<sup>27</sup> For more on Rilke's approach to time and temporality, see Carol Jacobs' *Telling Time: Levi-Strauss, Ford, Lessing, Benjamin, de Man, Wordsworth, Rilke*.

myths of the past appear to him as something irretrievably lost, the opposite of Hölderlin.<sup>28</sup> This is evident at the conclusion of the second elegy:

Fänden auch wir ein reines, verhaltenes, schmales  
Menschliches, einen unseren Streifen Fruchtlands  
zwischen Strom und Gestein. Denn das eigene Herz übersteigt uns  
noch immer wie jene. Und wir können ihm nicht mehr  
nachschaun in Bilder, die es besänftigen, noch in  
göttliche Körper, in denen es größer sich mäßigt.<sup>29</sup>

The speaker laments that we can no longer return to the images and “godlike bodies” [“göttliche Körper”] of the past in order to make sense of ourselves and find comfort in the myths in which we once saw ourselves reflected. In fact, an altered relation to the past such as this one is among the hallmarks of modernity, defined by David Frisby as “the modes of experiencing that which is ‘new’ in ‘modern’ society.”<sup>30</sup> In his book *Fragments of Modernity*, on three preeminent theorists of modernity, Georg Simmel, Siegfried Kracauer and Walter Benjamin, Frisby writes, “in their different ways, Simmel, Kracauer and Benjamin were all concerned with the new modes of the perception and experience of time, space and causality as transitory, fleeting and fortuitous or arbitrary--an experience located in the immediacy of social relations, including our relations with the social and physical environment of the metropolis and our relations with the past.”<sup>31</sup>

Although Hölderlin was active during the advent of modernity and Rilke towards its end, both

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<sup>28</sup> I regard this fact as related to the notion of a modern “crisis of experience” as it has been described by Martin Jay in *Songs of Experience* in the chapter “Lamenting the Crisis of Experience.” The feeling of being severed from the past is, I believe, a consequence of the inability to experience. We relate to the past through our encounters (experiences) with artifacts. Moreover, these artifacts, as in the case of artworks and myths, are themselves the products of repeated, collective experiences.

<sup>29</sup> Manfred Engel identifies this passage as a “precise description of the apollonian organizational task” in his commentary to this poem (*Werke: kommentierte Ausgabe in vier Bänden*, volume II, p. 634).

<sup>30</sup> Frisby, David. *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin*. 1st MIT Press ed. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

question the belief that humans are on the path towards unlimited knowledge and the total conquest of nature and the assumption that this would even be a positive achievement.

The elegies also include references to music, an indication--according to Gumbrecht--that the poems might be seeking to make present moods or atmospheres or to reflect upon them and thereby consider the role of affect in everyday human experience. Take, for example, the conclusion of the final strophe of the first elegy:

Ist die Sage umsonst, daß einst in der Klage um Linos  
wagende erste Musik dürre Erstarrung durchdrang;  
daß erst im erschrockenen Raum, dem ein beinah göttlicher Jüngling  
plötzlich für immer enttrat, die Leere in jene  
Schwingung geriet, die uns jetzt hinreißt und tröstet und hilft.

In this passage, the speaker reflects upon the death of Linus, the brother of Orpheus and the inventor of music in Greek mythology. The speaker describes an atmosphere of departure. The place from which Linus suddenly departs is said to be “startled” [“erschrocken”], and the empty space he leaves behind begins to oscillate in such a way that those left behind find themselves carried away--and comforted--by the atmosphere or mood that his departure has produced. One rarely encounters a more striking depiction of *Stimmung* in a text. The “venturing first music” [“wagende erste Musik”] serves both as a lament for Linus and a way of describing the atmosphere or mood of the scene. However, whereas Hölderlin explores the relationship of *Stimmung* to temporality--and while Rilke’s poem also betrays a similar interest in time--the way Rilke relates *Stimmung* to space is of a greater significance.<sup>32</sup> This is evident in the passage cited

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<sup>32</sup> In her essay “Interstitial Space in Rilke’s Short Prose Works,” Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei asserts that “Rilke is the modern writer for whom space is most thematically prominent, and who is persistently invoked in major theories of poetic or literary space.” One example she gives of Rilke being invoked in regard to space is Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space*, a book on architecture in which Rilke is quoted.

above. The speaker is more concerned with the *Stimmung* of a particular place, namely the “startled space” [“im erschrockenen Raum”] from which Linus departs--as well as the ensuing “oscillation” [“Schwingung”] of the emptiness of the space he once occupied--than that of a particular time or temporality.

As with an altered relation to the past, itself indicative of a changed experience of time, new modes of experiencing space are among the characteristic responses to the changes that took place during the rise of modernity, in particular the emergence of the modern metropolis. Frisby states this in the excerpt cited above. Later, he introduces another idea, one which is crucial to an understanding of Rilke’s poem and its treatment of space, namely Simmel’s conception of psychologism. According to Simmel, psychologism is “the experiencing and interpretation of the world in terms of the reactions of our inner life and indeed as an inner world, the dissolution of fixed contents in the fluid element of the soul, from which all that is substantive is filtered and whose forms are merely forms of motion.”<sup>33</sup> He considered this to be “the essence of modernity as such.” Rilke’s poem bears the marks of such a “dissolution of fixed contents,” especially as it pertains to physical spaces, of which the poem contains many. Time and again, the text constructs spaces and then calls into question--or even dissolves entirely--the boundaries between them. Moreover, in keeping with Simmel, many of the poem’s spaces are purely internal, existing only in the mind of the speaker. Ultimately, the poem’s significance lies in the way in which, faced with “the dissolution of fixed contents in the fluid element of the soul,”<sup>34</sup> it intervenes in the changing experience of space, declaring the subject the architect and navigator of his or her own spaces, an act reflected in the poem’s form. Moreover, by linking particular

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<sup>33</sup> Frisby, David. *Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Work of Simmel, Kracauer, and Benjamin*. 1st MIT Press ed. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1986.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

spaces to particular moods and atmospheres, the text indicates that the subject, in constructing personal spaces, can be the author of his or her own moods and atmospheres. In Hölderlin, by contrast, the subject is conceived of as being able to encounter various historical *Stimmungen*, but not necessarily to produce them.

### **Personal Juncture and the Crisis of Modernity**

The first of the *Duino Elegies* is staged at the point of an existential crisis and creative juncture in the biography of the lyrical subject. The former is evident at the beginning of the first strophe, when the speaker asks himself what would happen if he cried out in existential despair:

Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel  
Ordnungen? und gesetzt selbst, es nähme  
einer mich plötzlich ans Herz: ich verginge von seinem  
stärkeren Dasein. (...)

The speaker posits the existence of a transcendent and hierarchical order of angels but laments that he would encounter certain annihilation were he to come face to face with one of them.

Ultimately, he stifles his cries. The angels return periodically throughout the remainder of the cycle, and the subsequent poems are transfigured in the light of this initial spiritual crisis.

Moreover, the angels are contrasted with another non-human group, the animals. If the angels are taken to represent all that is transcendent and perfectly complete, the animals are taken to represent the apogee of blissful ignorance. Humans, by contrast, remain conscious of their own limitations, which they must attempt to come to terms with. The second part of the speaker's crisis, the creative juncture, becomes apparent later, in the second strophe:

Ja, die Frühlinge brauchten dich wohl. Es muteten manche

Sterne dir zu, daß du sie spürtest. Es hob  
 sich eine Woge heran im Vergangenen, oder  
 da du vorüberkamst am geöffneten Fenster,  
 gab eine Geige sich him. Das alles war Auftrag.  
 Aber bewältigtest du's? Warst du nicht immer  
 noch von Erwartung zerstreut, als kündigte alles  
 eine Geliebte dir an? (...) <sup>35</sup>

Here, the speaker questions the success of his past artistic accomplishments. The allusions to spring, stars and music, traditional poetic tropes, in conjunction with a reference later in the strophe to the 16th century Italian poet, Gaspara Stampa, indicate that the speaker, like Rilke, is a poet. The language of this passage is highly metaphorical. The speaker laments that, while he has written many poems in the past, he was never able to move beyond them. Instead, he says, he waited in vain, “distracted by anticipation” [“von Erwartung zerstreut”] for the world to reveal itself to him more fully. The poem’s staging at a personal juncture is important for two reasons. First, it provides a pretense within the logic of the text for the creative outpouring that is the poem itself. And second, it functions as a metaphor for the crisis of modernity taking place at the time of the poem’s composition as a result of dramatic geopolitical developments, most notably the start of the First World War and the rise of the modern metropolis. This crisis of modernity is discernible in the poem’s rendering of space, and in its depiction of what Simmel terms “psychologism,” “the experiencing [*das Erleben*] and interpretation of the world in terms of the reactions of our inner life and indeed as an inner world.” <sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Werke: Kommentierte Ausgabe in Vier Bänden*, Edited by Manfred Engel. 1 Aufl. Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1996.

<sup>36</sup> *Fragments of Modernity*.

The first of many references to space appears towards the end of the first strophe. The speaker, in his enumeration of the night's alluring qualities, describes a "wind full of cosmic space" ["Wind voller Weltraum"]. Somewhat later, at the conclusion of the strophe, he draws attention to the spaces we inhabit:

Weißt du's *noch* nicht? Wirf aus den Armen die Leere  
zu den Räumen hinzu, die wir atmen; vielleicht dass die Vögel  
die erweiterte Luft fühlen mit innigerm Flug.

In both cases, space verges on interiorization.<sup>37</sup> In the first, the "cosmic space" brought to earth by the night wind is imagined by the speaker, though the wind is not. In the second, his call to cast out inner emptiness into the spaces that surround us posits a spaciality that blurs the distinction between the speaker's imagination and the outside world. Moreover, the speaker urges the addressee to take part in the rearrangement of space, which becomes possible only when space have becomes fully internalized. This, according to Frisby, would mark the realization of modernity as Simmel defines it, namely psychologism:

Modernity is thus a particular mode of lived experience within modern society, one that is reduced not merely to our inner responses to it but also to its incorporation in our inner life. The external world becomes part of our inner world. In turn, the substantive element of the external world is reduced to a ceaseless flux and its fleeting, fragmentary and contradictory moments are all incorporated into our inner life.<sup>38</sup>

The incorporation into our inner life of the "fleeting flux" of the external world that Frisby describes here is an important aspect of the elegies. External change is interiorized and experienced as inner unsteadiness and fluidity. In the first elegy, this is expressed in the first strophe in terms of man's transcendental homelessness, an experience of the world that the

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<sup>37</sup> Although they verge on interiorization, it is important to note that the spaces that the poem depicts are not yet *fully* interiorized. Gasetti-Ferencei comments on the tendency to lump all of Rilke's depictions of spaces into the category "Weltinnenraum," a term used to describe fully interiorized, imaginative poetic space.

<sup>38</sup> *Fragments of Modernity*, p. 46.

speaker distinguishes from that of the angels and animals, who are both--though they exist at opposite ends of the spectrum of consciousness--at home in the world.

An important aspect of blurring the distinctions between external and imagined spaces is the transcendence of the boundary between the realm of life and the imagined realm of death. This occurs twice in the first elegy. In the third strophe, the speaker, addressing himself, recalls entering churches in Italy during his travels:

Es rauscht jetzt von jenen jungen Toten zu dir.  
 Wo immer du eintratest, redete nicht in Kirchen  
 zu Rom und Neapel ruhig ihr Schicksal dich an?<sup>39</sup>

The speaker, having internalized both realms, dissolves the border between them. At a later point in the poem, this dissolution of the border between life and death returns, after a reflection on death. This time, the angels, rather than the speaker, are the agents of transcendence, although they are, in a sense, the speaker's creation:

(...) --Aber Lebendige machen  
 alle den Fehler, daß sie zu stark unterscheiden.  
 Engel (sagt man) wüßten oft nicht, ob sie unter  
 Lebenden gehn oder Toten. Die ewige Strömung  
 reißt durch beide Bereiche alle Alter  
 immer mit sich und übertönt sie in beiden.

Again, the speaker does not deny the existence of the separate realms occupied by life and death. Rather, he suggests that the border between them is fluid, which means, by extension, that the spaces themselves are fluid and subject to change. In the internal world of the speaker, as the

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<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, although Rilke was writing the *Duino Elegies* around the time of the "crisis of experience" that Martin Jay describes in his *Songs of Experience*, The first of the *Duino Elegies* is deeply grounded in the speaker's experiences, from which he appears to glean useful pieces of wisdom.



poem depicts it, the angels provide a model for transcending the boundaries between exterior and interior spaces and thereby restructuring reality, all of which humans should strive to replicate in themselves. Not only does the poem, which depicts the inner world of a subject on the path towards total internalization--and thus the fulfillment of modernity--accept this state of affairs, it sees in it the prospect of a liberation from the laws of space and the possibility of a total restructuring of reality by the subject.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, *Stimmung* plays an integral role in this process, as the poem describes it.

The relationship between space and *Stimmung* is complex. Particular moods and atmospheres frequently arise in particular spaces, and, to a certain degree, they are dependent on the existence of spaces to evoke and contain them. At the same time, however, moods and atmospheres are inherently resistant to boundaries and have the potential to transcend a space's borders. The poem's final scene, the death of Linus, quoted on page two, posits a model for the relationship between space and *Stimmung*. The sudden emptying of the space once occupied by Linus as a result of his death gives rise to a mood or atmosphere that, in turn, becomes a source of rapture and solace for those remaining. According to the story, changes in space or the sudden transcendence of spatial boundaries, in this case Linus' transcendence of the boundary between the realms of life and death, can become sources of *Stimmung*. Moreover, the poem makes the claim that a particular *Stimmung* can provide comfort or solace and thereby contribute to the spiritual growth of an individual. Interestingly, the two metaphors for *Stimmung* Gumbrecht discusses, namely music and weather, differ in one respect, with significant theoretical implications for an understanding of Rilke's poem. The creation of music necessarily involves

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<sup>40</sup> In the abstract to her essay, Gosetti-Ferencei describes Rilke's project--at least as it relates to space--in his short prose works as "a poetical renegotiation of the limits of human experience." In my opinion, this is an apt phrase for describing Rilke's project in the first of the *Duino Elegies*.

the participation of a human agent whereas that of weather does not. Therefore, in choosing music as a way of describing *Stimmung*, Rilke insinuates that humans can and do play a role in the creation of moods and atmospheres. His poem, and in particular the aforementioned scene, suggests that this is to be done by first internalizing and then reorganizing space, a process begun by transcending existing spatial boundaries.

Naturally, Rilke's poem does not come with a set of instructions for how to restructure reality and create moods and atmospheres by internalizing space. It posits a relationship, however, between humans, space and *Stimmung* that is fluid and mutually interactive. Moreover, the poem affirms the value of such a relationship and recognizes in it the possibility for spiritual growth and development. If it is possible for humans, by internalizing space, to devise moods and atmospheres and for mood and atmospheres, in turn, to provide solace and guidance to humans, then it follows that humans can be the source of their own solace and guidance in a time in which the omnipotence--and existence--of god has been profoundly called into question. Moreover, while it does not provide instructions for how to do this, the poem, through its form, models for the reader such a relationship to space.

### **The Space of Poetic Form**

The individual's changing relationship to space in modernity is modeled by the relationship of the lyrical I to the form of the first *Duino Elegy*. More precisely, the interplay of paratactic and hypotactic structures on the level of the strophe creates the impression that the reader is observing the speaker encountering and navigating the spaces delineated by the poem's form. According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, "in a hypotactic style, one

specifies the logical relationships among elements, rendering the entailments and dependencies among them explicit by placing them in a hierarchy of levels of grammatical subordination.”<sup>41</sup> In a paratactic style, on the other hand, “the logical relationships among elements are not specified but are left to be inferred by the reader.”<sup>42</sup> In the case of the first *Duino Elegy*, this refers to the fact that some strophes introduce discrete ideas while others serve to qualify or expand on the ideas of the preceding strophe, thereby recalling these grammatical structures. Generally speaking, parataxis serves to undermine order whereas hypotaxis upholds the logical hierarchy that underlies most writing. By moving from a paratactic mode to a hypotactic one, on the level of the strophe, the poem models a scenario in which the speaker, initially constrained by the limits of the strophe, begins transcending those limits, thereby becoming the architect of his own spaces within the form of the poem. This is precisely what the poem calls on the reader to do in life. Thus, the poem’s form models the action it demands.

The first instance of paratactic motion occurs between the first and second strophes:

Weißt du’s *noch* nicht? Wirf aus den Armen die Leere  
zu den Räumen hinzu, die wir atmen; vielleicht daß die Vögel  
die erweiterte Luft fühlen mit innerem Flug.

Ja, die Frühlinge brauchten dich wohl. Es muteten manche  
Sterne dir zu, daß du sie spürtest. Es hob  
sich eine Woge heran im Vergangenen, oder  
da du vorüberkamst am geöffneten Fenster,  
gab eine Geige sich hin. Das alles war Auftrag.

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<sup>41</sup> Burt, J. “Hypotaxis and Parataxis” in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, p. 650-51.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Here, the speaker transitions abruptly from a discussion of mankind's place in the universe to a passage in which he redirects his gaze towards his own life and reflects upon the value of his past poetic achievements. This gesture is repeated between the second and third strophes, when he jumps from a disavowal of romantic relationships to an interpretation of religion and saints:

(...) Ist es nicht Zeit, daß wir liebend  
 uns vom Geliebten befreien und es bebend bestehn:  
 wie der Pfeil die Sehne besteht, um gesammelt im Absprung  
*mehr* zu sein als er selbst. Denn Bleiben ist nirgends.

Stimmen, Stimmen. Höre, mein Herz, wie sonst nur  
 Heilige hörten: daß die der riesige Ruf  
 aufhob vom Boden; sie aber knieten,  
 Unmögliche, weiter und achtetens nicht:  
 So waren sie hörend. (...)

In both cases of paratactic motion, the poem gives the impression that the speaker has been cut off by the end of the strophe and that he must reorient himself at the beginning of the following strophe with regard to a new theme. The trajectory of the speaker's ruminations is not determined by him, but rather it is set by the objective structure of the poem. According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia*, "parataxis (...) is suited to rendering thoughts and actions from the urgent perspective of a participant caught in the immediate flow of events."<sup>43</sup> Initially, the speaker is indeed "caught in the immediate flow of events," more specifically in the mounting disorder and confusion caused by the onset of modernity.

Between the third and fourth strophes, however, something changes. The speaker encounters the interruption caused by the end of the strophe, but, instead of settling on a new

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

topic, he returns to the subject he had been discussing in the previous strophe, namely the nature of death:

Es rauscht jetzt von jenen jungen Toten zu dir.  
 Wo immer du eintratest, redete nicht in Kirchen  
 zu Rom und Neapel ruhig ihr Schicksal dich an?  
 Oder es trug eine Inschrift sich erhaben dir auf,  
 wie neulich die Tafel in Santa Maria Formosa.  
 Was sie mir wollen? leise soll ich des Unrechts  
 Anschein abtun, der ihrer Geister  
 reine Bewegung manchmal ein wenig behindert.

Freilich ist es seltsam, die Erde nicht mehr zu bewohnen,  
 kaum erlernte Gebräuche nicht mehr zu üben,  
 Rosen, und andern eigens versprechenden Dingen  
 nicht die Bedeutung menschlicher Zukunft zu geben,  
 das, was man war in unendlich ängstlichen Händen  
 nicht mehr zu sein, und selbst den eigenen Namen  
 wegzulassen wie ein zerbrochenes Spielzeug.

On the level of form, this moment represents a crucial point in the development of the speaker. It is the point at which he transcends the boundaries set up by the poem and becomes the architect of his own, interior spaces.<sup>44</sup> This is repeated between the fourth and final strophes, thereby signalling the permanence of this development in the speaker. According to the *Princeton Encyclopedia*, “hypotaxis can (...) suggest that the speaker is somewhat detached from the immediacy of the action, perhaps to enable a deeper purchase upon its nature or a more

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<sup>44</sup> I do not wish to suggest that the spaces the speaker masters are merely imagined. On the contrary, he must first learn to navigate the objective spaces of reality before beginning to internalize them and eventual gain mastery over them.

reflective account of its meaning.”<sup>45</sup> Indeed, the poem’s speaker, by fully internalizing and thus gaining mastery over the poem’s spaces, detaches himself from the flow of the poem’s form in order to delve deeper into the perennial questions he is seeking to comprehend.

### **Form and *Stimmung***

In *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung* Gumbrecht maintains that one should read for *Stimmung* much in the same way that one might read for the plot of a text.<sup>46</sup> The revolutionary potential of reading for *Stimmung*, he adds, lies in the fact that it is the orientation of many non-professional readers and thus is both already familiar and represents an opportunity to break away from overused academic approaches to interpreting literature. He does, however, draw attention to the difficulty of writing about *Stimmung* when he maintains that specific moods and atmospheres are experienced on a continuum and “present themselves to us as nuances that challenge our powers of discernment and description, as well as the potential of language to capture them.”<sup>47</sup> The problem with reading for *Stimmung* lies then in the difficulty of capturing in words something as inherently nebulous and subject to change as mood or atmosphere. Fortunately, the solution to this problem is to be found in the very nature of *Stimmung* itself. Suggesting we treat texts more as components of our physical environments than as mere collections of ideas, Gumbrecht maintains that “tones, atmospheres, and *Stimmungen* never exist

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<sup>45</sup> “Hypotaxis and Parataxis,” p. 650-51.

<sup>46</sup> Gumbrecht compares this with Peter Brooks’ notion of reading for the plot, as put forth in his book of the same name (*Reading for the Plot*).

<sup>47</sup> *Atmosphere, Mood, Stimmung*, p. 4.

wholly independent of the material components of works--above all, their prosody.”<sup>48</sup> In the following passage, he further expounds on this idea:

An ontology of literature that relies on concepts derived from the sphere of *Stimmung* does not place the paradigm of representation front-and-center. “Reading for *Stimmung*” always means paying attention to the textual dimension of the forms that envelop us and our bodies as a physical reality--something that can catalyze inner feelings without matters of representation necessarily being involved.<sup>49</sup>

These apparently simple ideas offer myriad possibilities for thinking about *Stimmung*, among them the possibility of discovering the source of a text’s *Stimmung* somewhere altogether outside of its descriptive content. This is especially relevant to a reading of the first of the *Duino Elegies*, which favors rhetorical questions and descriptions of inner states over explicitly representative content, yet which nevertheless has a distinct and easily identifiable mood or atmosphere.

Although the term *Stimmung* has since taken on myriad meanings, each with a theoretical framework to support it, traditional theories of *Stimmung* typically treat it as a mediation of opposites. Rilke’s poem is indeed constructed around a pair of opposites, reflected in the poem’s vision of the world as well as in its architectonic structure. At the beginning of the first elegy, the speaker of the poems invokes in a single breath both the “the ranks of the angels” [“der Engel Ordnungen”] and the threat of annihilation should he transcend the border that separates him from them, thereby establishing a dichotomy between order and permanence on the one hand and chaos, transience and flux on the other. In the world of the poem, angels, humans and animals are each assigned a particular realm of experience, as are certain subgroups of humans. (The speaker is particularly interested in the experiences of lovers as well as those of the figures he

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

terms the “early-departed” [“der Frühentrückten”] although the lives of heroes and saints also interest him).

Even the angels are organized into ranks, as the passage cited above indicates. However, the divisions between realms are continually threatened by powerful forces of disorder and change. This dichotomy between order and chaos is reflected in the interplay of parataxis and hypotaxis on the level of the strophe, as discussed in the previous section of this chapter. In its content, as well as in its structure, Rilke’s poem is built around a pair of seemingly irreconcilable opposites, which it seeks to mediate for the purpose of testing the limits of modernity and attempting to marry all that seems to have been irretrievably lost with all that is positive about modern civilization.

Rilke’s use of parataxis and hypotaxis in the first of the *Duino Elegies* thus serves a twofold purpose. First, it plays an important part in modelling the development of the individual subject as he or she becomes the architect of his or her own interior spaces, a development that the poem seeks to enact in the reader. This has been detailed in the second section of the present chapter. And second, the interplay between parataxis and hypotaxis on the level of the strophe, the single distinguishing feature of the poem’s architectonic structure, is also the primary source of its *Stimmung* in the absence of explicitly representational content. More precisely, this *Stimmung* is one of great anxiety and is related to the ongoing crisis of modernity of which the *Duino Elegies* serve as a testament. This anxiety arises from the poem’s effort to mediate formally between two seemingly irreconcilable opposites. On the one hand, there is the sense of order and permanence associated with tradition, and on the other, the chaos and flux of



modernity. In the poem, both are interiorized and translated into the language of existential states.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, the success of the poem's attempt at mediation remains ambiguous. On the one hand, it successfully models, by means of its architectonic strategy, the evolution of the individual subject that it seeks to bring about in the reader. This is evident in the way the poem transitions from an overwhelmingly paratactic to a decidedly hypotactic mode. On the other hand, however, this does not represent the completed mediation at which the poem aims, for if this were the case, there would be no need for the nine remaining poems in the cycle, and indeed, the poem concludes with a question:

Ist die Sage umsonst, daß einst in der Klage um Linos  
wagende erste Musik dürre Erstarrung durchdrang;  
daß erst im erschrockenen Raum, dem ein beinah göttlicher Jüngling  
plötzlich für immer enttrat, die Leere in jene  
Schwingung geriet, die uns jetzt hinreißt und tröstet und hilft.

Perhaps the poem--and the entire cycle--are intended to represent such a "venturing first music" ["wagende erste Musik"]. If so, then it is an anxious music, made more so by the poem's discrete but simultaneous endeavors: the total restructuring of reality by means of the interiorization of space and the mediation between order and chaos. Although the attempt at mediation is left unresolved within the boundaries of the poem, perhaps only the achievement of the first endeavor, the mastery of space through internalization, would make possible the realization of such an effort.

## CLOSING REMARKS

In conclusion, the significance of Hölderlin's and Rilke's respective interventions into the prevailing discourses around time and space of their eras lies in the ways in which each poet considers the affective dimension of human experience. In Hölderlin, *Stimmung* is shown to be capable of revealing to the individual ulterior temporalities such as the mythical and the primordial temporalities that stand in contrast to our modern notion of time in "Mnemosyne." In Rilke, on the other hand, *Stimmung* is given the properties of healing and guiding, the ability to effect an incursion into the course of a human life. In both cases, mood or atmosphere is made an important part of the poet's personal conception of the universe, and lyrical experience, the immediate, affective dimension of experience embodied by the poet, is given primacy.

Not only does each poet consider lyrical experience to be the most authentic form of experience, but, as is evidenced in Rilke's poem "An Hölderlin," the poet is seen to transmit important wisdom via the moods and atmospheres he or she makes present in his or her work, more immediate, it would seem, than any concrete lessons a text might have to offer. Although Hölderlin does not argue this explicitly as Rilke does, both poets betray a sense of understanding this fact in their works. In Hölderlin's case, the wanderer in "Mnemosyne" can be seen to guide the reader through affective states and their corresponding temporalities. In Rilke, the poems' speaker takes the reader through similarly affective states as he recalls the places he has visited. This deep understanding of role of affect, here in the form of moods and atmospheres, in human experience serves as the binding principle for the two chapters of this thesis. It is the stable

center around which the preceding reflections revolve and the means by which those same reflections overcome questions of influence that inevitably arises from the historical embeddedness of both poets in their respective social and artistic contexts.

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